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EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES

**Fourth periodical report
presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe
in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter**

THE NETHERLANDS

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 2008-2011

Fourth State report on the measures taken by the
Netherlands with regard to the implementation of the Charter

1. Broadly speaking, the Netherlands has pursued unchanged the policy pertaining to the languages in our country that come under the protection of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. For that reason, it has been decided on this occasion to release a condensed report that outlines only the most important developments in light of the recommendations laid down by the Committee of Experts in 2008 – see its report with reference no. ECMRL (2008) 3 – and by the Committee of Ministers.

Frisian language

Frisian in education

2. In recommendation no. 1 the Committee of Experts asks the Netherlands “to develop an overall and coherent policy for the teaching of and in Frisian at all levels of education and to adopt concrete measures for its implementation”. In response to this, the Committee of Ministers asked for “the teaching of and in Frisian [to be strengthened] at all levels of education”.
3. In par. 151 of its report, the Committee of Experts provides an overview of shortcomings as perceived by the committee. In order to address these shortcomings better, the government has inquired at the request of the province of Fryslân into the way in which the involvement of the provincial government can be expanded in relation to improving the teaching of and in Frisian. The following steps have been taken in that regard over the past few years.
4. On 26 May 2009, the then Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, acting also for the State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations, set up a Steering Committee for the Decentralisation of the Frisian Language to the Province of Fryslân. All of this arose from the 2008-2011 Central Government-Provinces Administrative Agreement which came into effect on 4 June 2008.
5. This Steering Committee was tasked with making proposals for a coherent decentralisation and coordination of duties connected with the Frisian language. After careful consideration, the Steering Committee reached the conclusion that a wide-ranging assignment would be involved.
6. In view of the fact that – in the Steering Committee’s opinion, as far as the Frisian language was concerned – the most striking stumbling block in the relationship between central government and the province of Fryslân was in bringing about the educational legislation relating to Frisian in education as well as in bringing about the educational paragraph in the 2001-2010 Covenant for the Frisian Language and Culture, the Steering Committee held that the focus of its work should extend in the first instance to the position of Frisian in education and to the question which, according to Dutch legislation, are the stakeholders that have responsibilities on Frisian in education.
7. The Steering Committee completed its final report in 2010, and this was subsequently presented to the Ministers of Education, Culture and Science and of the Interior and Kingdom Relations on 4 March 2011.

8. The Steering Committee notes in its final report that it is aware the Netherlands has entered into a number of obligations that also touch on Frisian-language education within the context of obligations under European treaties – especially the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995). It does not follow automatically from these obligations under treaty that the policy in respect of the Frisians and their language and culture should be decentralised to the greatest possible extent to the authority that bears primary responsibility within the Netherlands for the Frisian language and culture – in this case the province of Fryslân.
9. The idea of central government having (co-) responsibility for the Frisian language and culture dates as far back as 1969 and, as such, is fully in accordance with the obligations under the treaties entered into in the 1990s within the context of the Council of Europe. The desire for decentralisation is thus on a different basis, specifically a statutory one. That goal was first intrinsically expressed as such in the final report “*Ruimte, Regie en Rekenschap*” by the Ladders Committee and subsequently in the 2008-2011 Central Government-Provinces Administrative Agreement.
10. The Steering Committee concludes on the grounds of Section 115 of the Provinces Act and Article 23 of the Constitution that decentralisation of the Frisian language in education is possible under certain conditions. An initial impetus in that regard had in fact already been given in Section 9, subsection 4, of the Primary Education Act (WPO). Pursuant to this, the Provincial Executive of Fryslân has the power to grant exemptions from the obligation also to teach in the Frisian language at primary schools in the province of Fryslân. A request to that end needs to come from the competent authority at the school concerned. A similar provision exists in respect of secondary schools in the province of Fryslân, this being in Section 11e, subsection 1, of the Secondary Education Act (WVO).
11. The Steering Committee stated subsequently that, unlike in the case of granting exemptions, the power to determine core objectives for the Frisian language in primary and secondary education has not yet been decentralised at the present time. The rule that applies in respect of core objectives is that they be adopted in an order in council following prior submission to both Houses of the States General (cf. Section 9, subsection 5, of the WPO and Section 11e of the WVO). The Steering Committee proposes decentralising this power to the province of Fryslân provided that it is clad with safeguards.
12. Furthermore, the Steering Committee established in its talks with the province of Fryslân that there was a need to be able to apply on a case by case basis the power to grant exemptions from the obligation to teach Frisian at primary or secondary schools and specifically in the sense that not only full but partial exemptions could be granted. The Steering Committee recommended amending the WPO and WVO accordingly in that regard.
13. Both of the ministers who had received the Steering Committee’s final report on 4 March 2011 formulated a number of policy amendments in response to that report. These were sent to the House of Representatives in a letter dated 30 June 2011

(Parliamentary Paper II, 2010-2011, 31 293, no. 105). An English translation of this letter has been attached as Appendix 1.

14. In their letter to the House, both of the ministers also discussed the findings of the Education Inspectorate in its report about Frisian in education: a report that was published on 24 November 2010. In its report, the Education Inspectorate observed that examinations or tests on the subject of Frisian at schools in Fryslân were few and that the teaching of Frisian had little connection with the learning needs of students in the province. At the same time, the Inspectorate questioned the support base for Frisian. The province is aware of this and is working on improving that support base.
15. In their letter to the House, both of the ministers made a number of proposals for reinforcing the role of the province of Fryslân further. Amendments to educational legislation are needed to achieve this (in particular, amendments to the WPO and WVO). At present, these legislative amendments are being officially prepared on the instructions of both ministers.
16. Amended legislation will give the province of Fryslân the power to draft core objectives for the subject of Frisian on its own initiative. In practice, this means that the Provincial Executive of Fryslân would be authorised to determine the core objectives for Frisian only once it has been indicated that the Minister of Education, Culture and Science is able to assent to those objectives. The minister will test them against the conditions referred to in the letter (see paragraph 3.3 of the letter, specifically under Article 23 of the Constitution). Should a difference of opinion exist between the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the province of Fryslân concerning the compliance of the new core objectives with these conditions, the minister will ask the Education Inspectorate for its recommendations.
17. The Steering Committee's report also discusses the possibility of a partial exemption from the core objectives for Frisian. In the case of a partial exemption, schools would be exempt from some of the core objectives for Frisian but not from all of them. For example, although they would not have to teach a written command of Frisian, they would have to teach an oral command of the language. Both ministers stated in their letter that provision would be made in law for this option.
18. The principle in relation to the statutory effect of partial exemption is that the Minister of Education, Culture and Science asks the province of Fryslân in consultation with the education sector to draw up the criteria for granting partial and full exemptions that can count on a reasonable support base among schools. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science will approve the proposed exemption criteria on the basis of overall responsibility for the educational system. The Education Inspectorate will be asked for its recommendations in the event of a difference of opinion or opposing views about these criteria. These recommendations will be public.
19. Reference is made to the unabridged text of the letter to the House concerning the other policy amendments aimed at improving Frisian in education for which legislative amendments are unnecessary.
20. Finally, within the context of provincial policy in respect of strengthening the support base for Frisian in education, it may be additionally noted that one of the spearheads in

provincial educational policy is focussed on establishing Frisian-speaking or bilingual playgroups (Frisian-Dutch) and trilingual primary schools (Frisian-Dutch-English). The province and education sector have jointly achieved the required degree of progress on this point, as the following data demonstrates:

	1996	2002	2007	2011
Frisian-speaking and bilingual playgroups	5	10	55	110
Trilingual primary schools		7	15	42

21. Moreover, apart from its recommendation no. 1, the Committee of Ministers has also asked the Netherlands to take into account the Committee of Experts' other findings in relation to Frisian in education.
22. In par. 92 of its 2008 report, the Committee of Experts cites a number of conclusions by the Inspectorate concerning education at that time. The Inspectorate observed a number of shortcomings in Frisian-language education, such as the fact that primary schools had generally not developed any policy for the subject of Frisian and for Frisian as a language of instruction and that 25% of the teachers who provided Frisian-language education did not have any formal qualification for the task.
23. In response to this, it should be noted that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science – within the context of the Quality Agreement – has also made an additional €100,000 annually available to both of the colleges of education for primary school teaching (PABOs) in Fryslân for 2010-2012. This grant was made available for the training of teachers in the subject of Frisian, in order to get the programme of refresher courses straightened out. Furthermore, steps were announced in the aforementioned letter to the House dated 30 June 2011 to improve the competence of teachers in respect of Frisian.
24. In respect of Frisian in secondary education, the Committee of Experts refers in par. 95 and 97 to a number of matters requiring further attention. For example, Frisian is a mandatory subject at secondary schools in Fryslân only in the first year. Frisian does not constitute any integral part of the curriculum in subsequent school years, 'which causes problems of continuity for the teaching of Frisian and thus problems regarding the final examination in which Frisian can be chosen as an optional exam', according to the committee's observations in par. 95.
25. The committee goes on in par. 97 to express its concern that the current situation at secondary education schools in Fryslân is inconsistent with the charter provision (Article 8(1)c. *iii*) endorsed by the Netherlands to focus on an integral position for the teaching of Frisian in the curriculum for secondary education.
26. It may be noted in response to this that the province of Fryslân is now involved experimentally, in collaboration with the educational sector, with the introduction of a trilingual programme in secondary education at three secondary school locations in particular, these being in Burgum (CSG Liudger), Koudum (CSG Bogerman) and Wommels (CSG Bogerman). The province's policy is focussed on making this trilingual programme possible at ten secondary school locations in the province. The

province has earmarked money for this within the context of the coalition agreement for provincial government (2011-2015).

27. In practice, this trilingual programme for secondary education entails Frisian being used as the language of instruction for the subjects of Frisian and history (which also includes the Frisian historical canon). English serves as the language of instruction for the subjects of English and mathematics, while Dutch is the language of instruction for the other subjects. By using the Frisian historical canon in the trilingual programme, the province of Fryslân is acting on the Committee of Experts' recommendation of 2008 (par. 102-103) to continue to focus its efforts on Frisian historical and cultural education.

The use of Frisian as an official language in public administration and in courts of law

28. In recommendation no. 2, the Netherlands is asked "to introduce practical measures in order to enable the use of Frisian in central State administration agencies located in the province of Fryslân, as well as in public services directly under State control".
29. The Committee of Experts subsequently noted in par. 152 of its report that central government bodies in the province of Fryslân did not yet have regulations at their disposal concerning the written use of Frisian in administrative matters, as a result of which there was not yet any official basis for its written use when in contact with these bodies and, consequently, written use was not in fact accepted.
30. In response to this report, the Committee of Ministers asked that the Netherlands 'adopt legal and practical measures in order to ensure the use of Frisian in central State administration agencies located in the province of Friesland
31. In the "Freedom and Responsibility" coalition agreement (2010-2014) that came into effect in 2010, the new government announced a language act in which the equal rights of the Dutch and Frisian languages within the province of Fryslân would be safeguarded.
32. Meantime, a legislative proposal is being prepared in line with the coalition agreement. An initial version of this legislative proposal was placed on the website www.internetconsultatie.nl in March 2011. This is a central government website that gives notice of the legislation and regulations that the Council of Ministers is preparing and for which consultations are being held via the internet. This enables citizens and bodies to respond to new proposals for legislation and regulations, their responses thus contributing to an improved version of the proposed text.
33. During the (internet) consultation period for the legislative proposal of the Frisian Language Act – which extended over the months of March and April 2011 – interested and concerned parties were given the opportunity to respond to the draft legislative proposal. A total of 154 citizens and bodies responded via the internet to the Frisian Language (Use) Act. 100 of these responses were positive.
34. Of these 100 positive responses, 53 were straightforward affirmations, while 47 contained additional observations and remarks in relation to the legislative proposal. The line taken in many of these responses was that the legislative proposal had still not

gone far enough on many points, partly because the proposal provided only for the use of Frisian in administrative and legal matters.

35. The content of the 54 negative responses principally contained observations that such legislation served no purpose and that a high cost would come attached to it. Moreover, a few were of the opinion that the legislative proposal was discriminatory and that Fryslân would isolate itself further from the rest of the Netherlands. 44 responses were written in Frisian.
36. Work is being done at the present time on amending the legislative proposal taking into account the responses that the Council of Ministers has received. The following may be noted within the context of this report based on the text that has been disclosed in connection with the internet consultation.
37. The background to the legislative proposal is to reinforce the opportunities to use Frisian in legal and administrative matters. The purpose of this Act of Parliament is to guarantee the right of everyone in the province of Fryslân to the use of their own language - whether Dutch or Frisian – in the courtroom and in communications with administrative bodies, thus safeguarding the equal position of Frisian and Dutch in the province of Fryslân.
38. The legislative proposal as consulted on contains a general provision in which Dutch and Frisian are listed as the two official languages of the province of Fryslân. The creation of a Body for the Frisian Language is also a part of this Act. Through the duties and powers provided for it in this Act, the Body for the Frisian Language can contribute towards the Frisian language being given equal status with Dutch in the province of Fryslân.
39. This new body replaces the Consultative Body for Frisian created in 1998 as an advisory body to the Minister of the Interior pursuant to Article 7, paragraph 4 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. In conformity with the 2010 Decree to Establish a Consultative Body for Frisian¹, this advisory body is tasked with making recommendations to the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations concerning the implementation of the Covenant for the Frisian Language and Culture between central government and the province of Fryslân. In addition, the Consultative Body for Frisian can also report on all matters relating to Frisian.
40. The proposal is to extend the duties of the body under the new Frisian Language Act to include reporting to all administrative and judicial authorities insofar as these are established in the province of Fryslân or else have the province of Fryslân as their sphere of activity, such as the Education Inspectorate. Alongside this, the Body can set parameters for policy plans and regulations for the purpose of the administrative bodies intended in this regard. This will be an important stimulus towards encouraging in a practical way not only municipal and provincial departments but also central government bodies in Fryslân to make it possible for Frisian to be used in written communications from and with citizens, as argued for by the Committee of Experts in 2008 (par. 152).

¹ Bulletin of Acts and Decrees 2010, no. 2161

41. Moreover, this legislative proposal contains additional provisions in respect of swearing oaths or making solemn affirmations in the Frisian language, particularly in legal matters.
42. Apart from this legislative proposal, it may be additionally noted that a further two developments have occurred in recent years in relation to the use of Frisian in official matters and merit attention in light of this report.
43. Firstly, the models for the nominations for the Provincial Council Elections of March 2011 have been translated into the Frisian language and published in a ministerial regulation. The text appeared in the Government Gazette of 24 December 2010 (no. 20760). However, there appeared to be insufficient time available to incorporate the amended models in the computerised software that the Electoral Commission places at the parties' disposal within the context of the nominations.
44. The government will consider whether it will be desirable in the future to make Frisian-language models available for matters such as nominations during elections and whether and to what extent amendments to regulations in respect of the right to vote are necessary.
45. Secondly, the Netherlands has taken the opportunity to have the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union translated into Frisian, because this language is treated as an official language within the province of Fryslân alongside Dutch.
46. The certified Frisian translation will be presented before the Secretariat of the Council of the European Union in the course of September 2011 pursuant to Article 55, paragraph 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and Article 358 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Subsequently, the Frisian translation will also be placed on the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations website.

The use of Frisian in broadcasting

47. In relation to the regional broadcasting network *Omrop Fryslân*, the committee remarks in par. 123 of its 2008 report that the Netherlands is fulfilling its charter obligations on this point. The committee goes on to insist that this broadcasting network be 'sufficiently funded on a permanent basis' by the Dutch authorities.
48. Responsibility for funding *Omrop Fryslân* falls to the province. Research conducted in 2009 by the Dutch Media Authority demonstrated that the province was fulfilling its financial duty of care. In addition, the broadcasting network receives annually an occasional contribution from central government especially for the development of Frisian-language programmes.

Frisian in social care facilities

49. In par. 147 of its 2008 report, the Committee of Experts notes that it is of the view that the Netherlands is fulfilling Article 13, paragraph 2, only in part. This specifically concerns the use of Frisian in social care facilities, such as hospitals and retirement

homes. The committee invites the Dutch authorities to provide additional information concerning the practical impact of the initiatives that have been developed by an ad hoc steering committee “Fries in de Zorg” (“Frisian in Care”). A number of the outcomes from the project are outlined below.

50. One of the outcomes from the steering committee “Fries in de Zorg” is that a variety of care institutions have made efforts for greater visibility of Frisian within their organisations, e.g. signs in Frisian. Over the past years, the province of Fryslân has tasked the Afûk Institute to promote the use of Frisian in care.
51. General practitioners (200), dentists (150), physiotherapy and speech therapy practices (160 and 40, respectively) and clinics (93) in Fryslân have been approached by Afûk with information about the possibility of using Frisian in healthcare.
52. According to the Afûk’s estimates, 60 to 70% of all healthcare centres possess material to stimulate the use of Frisian in healthcare. 50% of the healthcare institutions have received a ‘Just Speak Frisian’ mirror with magnetic *Praat-mar-Frysk* badges that are worn by staff while at work.

Regional languages: Limburgish and Low-Saxon

53. In recommendation no. 3, the Committee of Experts asks the Netherlands “to ensure that local and regional authorities co-ordinate and strengthen their efforts to protect and to promote the Low-Saxon language, particularly in the field of education.”
54. The Committee of Experts goes on to remark in par. 153 of its report that while “some co-ordination of measures for the protection and promotion” of Low Saxon does exist, the provinces concerned have not coordinated their activities in the field of education. According to observation, education in respect of Low Saxon tends to be organised locally. The Committee of Experts notes that it was unaware of any information about measures by central authorities to promote or facilitate coordination at the local or regional level.
55. In relation to this, the Committee of Experts remarks in Section 4.2, under point C, that: “The Dutch national authorities have confirmed their view that local and regional authorities are primarily responsible for the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages. On the one hand, the languages can benefit from such an approach as the closeness of these authorities leads very often to tailor-made measures. On the other hand, however, the lack of national language policy for the Part II languages implies that the local and regional authorities concerned lack overall guidance regarding the protection and promotion of the Charter in practice. The national authorities have, even if they delegate responsibilities to local and regional authorities, the final responsibility as the State Party to the Charter.
56. The Committee of Ministers next asks the Netherlands “to ensure that a national language policy for Limburgish and Low Saxon is developed, particularly in the field of education, in co-operation with the speakers and the provincial authorities”.
57. The Netherlands fully endorses the committee’s view that the State, as a Party to the Charter, is ultimately responsible for compliance with the Charter, even when it

concerns those languages that come under the protection of Part II of the Charter. However, with regard to the form that this ultimate responsibility should take, the Netherlands has opted for a different approach at the heart of which is indeed the primary responsibility of the provinces concerned. This certainly has the advantage of applying to policy the principle of a tailor-made approach that takes the local situation into account.

58. This approach is also connected in part to the fact that recognition of Low Saxon and Limburgish under Part II of the Charter has been brought about at the express request of the provinces concerned. They anticipated that, as a result of such recognition, provincial policy in respect of their own regional language would acquire greater prestige and would be more appreciated among their own population. In this case, therefore, there is no question of delegating central policy such as envisioned by the Committee of Experts. It is a matter of autonomous policy on the part of the provinces concerned which the provinces themselves are eager to see assessed in a European context.
59. No legislative amendments are necessary for the development of this autonomous policy for language and culture. Since as long ago as 1937 it has been possible in law also to use the regional language – where it is a living language – as the language of instruction in primary education. The Childcare Act which came into effect in 2004 contains a similar provision for childcare in a childcare centre. It is the government's opinion that through these measures the Netherlands is complying with the charter obligations in respect of Limburgish and Low Saxon, provided, of course, that effective provincial policy exists.
60. The example of Limburgish shows that the provincial policy is successful and hits the mark as also appears in fact from the Committee of Experts' 2008 report under point N in Section 4.2. The current state of affairs concerning provincial policy in respect of Limburgish is attached as Appendix 2.
61. The way in which policy is given shape in respect of Low Saxon differs from province to province and depends strongly on regional or even local influences. For outsiders, and possibly for a committee of experts as well, it might well appear that there is little evidence of coordination and harmonisation between the provinces concerned. The question is whether that is correct. In the government's opinion, the difference in approach between the provinces jointly can be explained to a significant degree by the fact that the authorities concerned wish to support as much as possible in their policy whatever is occurring on the ground locally, and in that respect Gelderland differs from Overijssel and Drenthe as shown from previous reports.
62. Nevertheless, partly in response to the Committee of Experts' report, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations has made it known to the provinces concerned in the Low Saxon-speaking region that the creation by the provinces of a Consultative Body for Low Saxon could possibly make a useful contribution to greater harmonisation and coordination where necessary and desirable. By this means, the government has sought to implement still further the ultimate responsibility that the Netherlands has as a Party to the charter.

63. In a letter dated 8 June 2010, the authorities concerned made it known to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations that they had decided to establish a Consultative Body for Low Saxon that was to be accommodated at the State University of Groningen (RUG).
64. A letter from the RUG to the authorities in the Low Saxon-speaking region clarified what the nature of the consultative body would be, also describing its objective, composition, activities and costs. The intention in the first instance is for the Consultative Body for Low Saxon to operate for a period of four years: 2010-2014. This will be followed by an evaluation of how the Consultative body is functioning. According to the RUG, a positive outcome may result in a continuation of the body for another four-year period.
65. In addition, the provinces in the Low Saxon-speaking region, together with the municipalities of Ooststellingwerf and Weststellingwerf, have submitted a request to the government to protect Low Saxon henceforth under Part III of the Charter. In the opinion of the provinces and municipalities concerned, their policy in respect of Low Saxon is already compliant at present with at least 37 of the provisions in Part III of the Charter.
66. Precisely because of the ultimate responsibility to which the Committee of Experts rightly refers, reason exists for the central authorities to ascertain carefully the extent to which the policy of the authorities concerned is indeed at the minimum level required by Part III. The ministries concerned are currently in the process of conducting this inquiry.

Non territorial languages: Yiddish and the Romani language

67. In recommendation no. 4, the Committee of Experts asks the Netherlands “to take measures to protect and promote the Romani language, in particular in the field of education, in co-operation with the speakers.”
68. The Committee of Experts goes on to note in par. 154 of its report that “there exists no direct contacts between the national authorities and the Sinti and Roma organisations”. The committee observes furthermore that “there is no teaching of Romani in Dutch schools.”
69. The Committee of Ministers subsequently asks the Netherlands “to ensure that a structured dialogue is developed with the representatives of the Romani-speakers and to take measures to protect and promote Romani, in particular in the field of education, in co-operation with the speakers.”
70. In the case of Roma and Sinti, central government has taken the conscious decision to transfer a number of duties and powers to local authorities, in part because the Roma and Sinti communities in the Netherlands are extremely limited in number and live dispersed across the country. For that reason, the Netherlands has decided not to pursue the Committee of Experts’ recommendation no. 4 in this format. Direct contact between central government and Roma organisations does exist, but there is no question of any structured consultation such as requested by the Committee of Ministers.

71. The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is facilitating Roma municipalities with the development of a more coherent and focussed approach in respect of this group through the subsidisation of the National Platform for Roma Municipalities.
72. Regular consultations take place with the National Information and Support Centre for Specific Target Groups (LISD) concerning the policy to combat underachievement in schools. The LISD has been created to give access to and further develop knowledge, information and expertise concerning the education given to specific target groups, such as Roma and Sinti. A specific need for teaching in Romani has not emerged from these consultations.
73. Finally, the Committee of Experts notes under Point O in Section 4.2 of its report that ‘Yiddish is taught in the final grades of the Cheider School in Amsterdam and there is an interest in starting the teaching of Yiddish at an earlier grade.’ In view of the specific situation of Yiddish, initiatives such as the publication of the cultural journal “Grine Medine” are important, the committee noted.
74. The cultural Journal “Grine Medine” remains to be an important initiative for the Yiddish language in the Netherlands. In August 2011, volume 74 of the “Grine Medine” has been published by the Yiddish Foundation (Stichting Jiddisj). And for Yiddish in school, the Cheider School in Amsterdam remains to be important as well as the only educational institute in the Netherlands where Yiddish is part of the curriculum.

Appendix 1

Frisian in education (Letter to the House of Representatives, 30 June 2011)

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW)
PO Box 16375
2500 BJ The Hague
www.rijksoverheid.nl

Our reference

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To the President of the House of Representatives
PO Box 20018
2500 EA THE HAGUE

Regarding: Council of Ministers' response tot Frisian: report by the Education Inspectorate and report by the Hoekstra steering committee

§1. It moat better! It kin better! [Things must improve! Things can improve!]

This letter concerns the teaching of the subject 'Frisian'. We propose setting jointly to work on strengthening the quality of Frisian-language education. The reason is that, although many Frisian schools make an effort with regard to the subject of Frisian, the teaching of that language could be improved. This emerged from the report by the Education Inspectorate published on 24 November 2010². Little testing is done for the subject of Frisian and Frisian teaching has little connection with the needs of students. Paragraph 2 explains more about our proposals for improving the situation.

The Hoekstra steering committee has also released its report on the subject of Frisian. You will have received this report on 9 March (your reference 32500-VII-81/2011D10893). Among the steering committee's observations were the opportunities for the decentralisation of powers concerning core objectives for the subject of Frisian. We have embarked on an elaboration of these recommendations in Paragraph 3 to the effect that Fryslân and the Frisian schools should receive maximum freedom when drafting and fulfilling the core objectives.

Our reason for going to these lengths is that Frisian occupies a specific position in the province of Fryslân as its second official language alongside Dutch. Therefore, the Council of Ministers is also underlining the agreements made in the '*European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*' and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Together with Fryslân, we are faced with the challenge of improving the teaching of Frisian. The Council of Ministers' priorities for education are clear: getting the fundamentals in order and raising the bar. There is increasing improvement within the broader context of educational quality in Fryslân. The question now remains of translating that improvement into the subject of Frisian. Our focus is on students shaping up to the best of their ability in this subject as well, so that they have the best possible preparation for a society in which both languages – Dutch and Frisian – play an important role in the public domain.

² Your House was sent this report on 24 November 2010, your reference 31293/83 and 31289/83

§2. Necessity for focussing on the educational quality of the subject of Frisian

The Education Inspectorate had already noted in 2001 and in 2006 that the teaching of the subject of Frisian could be improved. The inspectorate proceeded to conduct an inquiry into the quality of education in this subject within the context of the ‘Covenant for Frisian Language and Culture’.

§2.1 Further efforts in recent years

In recent years, considerable efforts have been made on the part of central government and the province to improve the quality of education for the subject of Frisian in Fryslân. In addition to the almost €1 million that the province receives annually to strengthen the Frisian language, teachers are also taking advantage of the teachers’ grant to improve their skills in Frisian. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) has also made an additional €100,000 annually available to Frisian colleges for 2010-2012 for the training of teachers in the subject of Frisian. Among the action taken by Fryslân itself is the development of a method that links in with the core objectives for Frisian (*Studio F*). Together with the sector, the province of Fryslân is presently involved in the setting up and certification of trilingual schools in which Frisian, Dutch and English will be used as the languages of instruction. At the moment, 39 schools in Fryslân have been certified as trilingual. According to the inspectorate, these schools devote approximately two to three times as many hours on the subject of Frisian as do non-trilingual schools. Frisian is performing better than average without performance in other subjects suffering as a consequence. The cost of this education is higher than for standard schools.

§2.2. A tangible result, but not in the classroom

The Education Inspectorate determined in its report³ that the prerequisites for the subject of Frisian had been improved by these efforts. More schools than before were using a method that focussed on the core objectives for the subject of Frisian, and more schools than before had appointed a language coordinator.

However, leaving aside the aforementioned trilingual schools, this had led to less progress in the classroom than might have been expected on that basis. There were still few teachers qualified for the subject of Frisian. Educational adjustments for the differences between students were still few despite there being clear differences in that regard; some students came from families where Frisian was the principal spoken language, others did not. Students were not being tested enough either, making it very hard to adjust delivery of the subject of Frisian to the specific learning needs of the students. In the inspectorate’s view, it was difficult to determine precisely what students had taken in from lessons in Frisian due to the lack of tests taken.

Furthermore, it was notable apart from this that the inspectorate questioned the popular support for Frisian. According to the inspectorate, it was in question whether there was sufficient popular support to expand the subject of Frisian at schools. The inspectorate felt that the potential for qualitative improvement of the subject of Frisian might also be limited by the small scale of this support base. In the end, it is a passion for the Frisian language among people in and surrounding a school that is of crucial importance. The province of Fryslân is aware of this challenge and, consequently, its policy is to enlarge the support base for Frisian in education as agreed in the Covenant for Frisian Language and Culture (2001).

³ See in relation to this the report by the Education Inspectorate, *De kwaliteit van het vak Fries in het basisonderwijs en het voortgezet onderwijs in Fryslân*, (2010) [The quality of the subject of Frisian in primary and secondary school education in Fryslân]. This report was sent to your House on 24 November 2010.

§2.3 Broader-based educational quality does lead to improvement

Contrarily, the broader quality of education in Fryslân (i.e. Dutch language, mathematics and other subjects) appears to be going from strength to strength. Around 2007, the province had a relatively large number of very weak schools: approximately six times as many compared to the national average. In order to improve this situation, the Primary Education Council, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the inspectorate, the province and, last but not least, the schools themselves have joined forces in recent years in the Boppeslach quality agreement. By ‘twinning’ good school heads with less good school heads, placing analysis teams urgently at the disposal of (very) weak schools and through additional language and mathematics improvement programmes, we have jointly set to work on improving educational quality in Fryslân.

These joint efforts appear to be having an effect. Out of 27 very weak schools in 2008, this number had been reduced to four by 1 May 2011. We would like to congratulate those schools that have improved. People put their heart and soul into achieving this with one aim in mind: better education for our students and getting the maximum out of each child. This is a good result and an incentive to schools still working on it. A targeted approach results in improvement.

Further inroads can be made to improving the quality of teaching Frisian and teaching in Frisian by taking a similarly targeted approach to Frisian in education.

§2.4 The fundamentals in order for teaching Frisian

It was agreed in the Covenant for Frisian Language and Culture (2001) that Fryslân would be responsible for policy concerning the Frisian language. That is why the province is the first party to expand the support base for Frisian. According to the inspectorate, a stronger support base can contribute towards more robust Frisian classes. The province receives annually a €1 million decentralised budget for ‘Frisian policy’ as agreed in the 2001 covenant.

According to the inspectorate, it is now up to the province to crystallise and update its exemptions policy. Only then will the inspectorate be able to monitor and supervise teaching Frisian as a subject. The province is working on this at present.

In addition, competences and qualifications for teaching staff in primary education must be clarified. The province has a steering role to play in ensuring that there is a low barrier to the provision available in teacher training courses for improvements to skills and qualifications with regard to Frisian⁴. We have agreed with the province that it will be focussing renewed attention on this.

The province’s efforts regarding Boppeslach will continue up to and including 2015. In addition to this, we wish to support the province regarding its policy for Frisian. We have agreed that the province’s commitment, with additional support from central government, will focus on evaluating teachers and their quality.

Conference on working and testing according to performance targets

The inspectorate recommended making better use of testing. While there is testing for the subject of Frisian, it is still employed too little. That is why the question of developing testing independent of method is not yet up for discussion: it is more important firstly to make the use of existing testing more self-explanatory. Tests clarify how students are faring. This helps teachers coordinate teaching to the needs of students and provides insight into teaching performance. We also refer to this working approach as performance-targeted working, a

⁴ See Implementation Covenant on the Frisian Language and Culture 2009

working approach that has had a proven effect on increasing the learning performance of students. The inspectorate indicated that the province had a steering role to play in this. To encourage testing and working to performance targets, we and the province are organising a conference for governing bodies, school heads and teachers on the use of testing and the utilisation of test data for Frisian in particular.

Teachers: bringing Frisian competences to the required standard

Teachers' competences for the subject of Frisian can and must improve. As mentioned previously, we have agreed with the province that they take pains over competence requirements and training opportunities for the subject of Frisian according to the agreed division of duties⁵.

Teachers can continue to benefit from the teachers' grant in order to raise their skills in the Frisian language to a higher level.

We shall be strengthening the focus on Frisian among teachers in Fryslân as follows:

1. We shall be having partners in the Frisian educational sector organise special teachers' days in which working to performance targets will be given prominence. Teachers will learn with each other in their own specific school situation how to engage in dialogue about educational performance and possible action for improvement;
2. We shall be calling for more attention to Frisian via the teachers' website www.leraar24.nl. Information about the subject of Frisian can thus be made accessible to a large(r) group of teachers. In consultation with the province, supplementary information and material can be made available via this website;
3. We shall be exploring the options for the subject of Frisian in the new professional register for teaching staff, which is still under construction. Teacher will be able to enter themselves on the professional register as competent and qualified teachers, including any supplementary skills. We would ask the parties concerned to ensure that teachers will be able to register their competences and qualifications for Frisian as well.

In elaborating on the programme of action for education focussed on working to performance targets, we shall also be focussing attention on these specific challenges with which Frisian schools are faced.

§3. Greater say on Fryslân's part concerning core objectives for Frisian

Alongside the quality of Frisian teaching, there is also the question of decentralising policy for the Frisian language from central government to Fryslân. This debate emerged from the report by the Lodders Committee⁶ which argued the case for such decentralisation.

The Hoekstra steering committee has been assigned with the task of ascertaining how policy for Frisian could be decentralised to Fryslân. The focus of the steering committee's inquiry into the Frisian language was entirely on the educational core objectives, and its conclusion was that decentralisation was legally possible. You will have received this report on 9 March 2011 (your reference 32500-VII-81/2011D10893).

We give wholehearted support to the principle that a province in which Frisian functions alongside Dutch as the official language should be given a say about policy pursuant to that language. Consequently, we would like to place the initiative with the province of Fryslân for making changes to the core objectives for Frisian.

⁵ See Implementation Covenant on the Frisian Language and Culture 2009

⁶ See the '*Ruimte, regie en rekenschap*', report by the Joint Committee for Decentralisation Proposals for Provinces (2008). The committee recommends that a committee be appointed to investigate the government duties vis-à-vis the Frisian language that could be decentralised to the province of Fryslân (officially referred to as *vertical delegation*).

Safeguards for good educational policy and educational freedom

As the steering committee has also indicated, decentralisation will have to be implemented with care and must be clad with adequate safeguards. The steering committee mentions two important conditions for decentralisation.

Support base

The steering committee states that there must be a support base among the schools sector for changes to the core objectives. The Primary Education Council indicated in a letter to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science that it would prefer the focus to be placed on the quality of education rather than on increasing the attention paid to Frisian at schools. In the event of decentralising the power to determine core objectives for Frisian, Frisian school boards fear being caught between requirements imposed on them by the province and national requirements. To prevent this, the province will always have to substantiate proposals for new core objectives for Frisian with a support base among the schools sector.

Balance in the curriculum

In addition, the Hoekstra steering committee felt that guarantees needed to remain concerning the balance in the entire educational programme.

Core objectives jointly constitute a complete entity: a balanced basis for the curriculum in primary and secondary education that should be a preparation for subsequent education. Changing one of the core objectives could have an effect on implementing other core objectives, such as in the division of teaching time between the various subjects or the attention given to subjects when furthering teachers' professional skills. Frisian schools also pointed this out.

As a result, we feel the steering committee's safeguards to be essential conditions for the decentralisation of core objectives.

Article 23 of the Constitution

In light of Article 23 of the Constitution, it is important to act with caution and restraint when decentralising the drafting of core objectives.

The basic principle underlying this article is that the provision of instruction should be free. This also implies a certain restriction on the regulations that can be imposed on education. It is for good reason that the fifth paragraph to the aforementioned article stipulates that requirements of soundness will be provided for by Act of Parliament⁷. Therefore, whether the setting of core objectives should not be provided for by an Act of Parliament has always been a point of discussion. Furthermore, in view of core objectives relating to the content of education, it is the case that additional reserve is appropriate to regulation in such cases given the freedom of education.

For these reasons, we must employ the utmost caution when decentralising powers concerning the drafting of core objectives.

Therefore, we consider three supplementary conditions to be necessary.

1. The division of duties and responsibilities between central government, the province and school boards must remain clearly defined. It must remain clear to schools, parents and other interested parties to whom they can go with questions or observations about education. Central government remains ultimately responsible for the intrinsic quality of education and the requirements imposed on schools.

⁷ Parliamentary Documents II 1997/98, 22 236 no. 46, page 3 (NB according to this letter, the principle applies that supervision is reserved exclusively to the Education Inspectorate) and see also Parliamentary Documents II 1995/96, 24 778, no. 3, page 9-10. See also Parliamentary Documents II 1990/91, 20 381, no. 23, page 5.

2. Decentralising the core objectives for Frisian may not result in a restriction of Frisian schools' room for manoeuvre. Schools may not be given any additional burdens (administrative or otherwise) as a result of double the regulatory involvement on the part of government. Obtaining finance may not become more complicated for schools either, and schools must not become dependent on an additional tier of government for this.
3. Core objectives make the educational programme transparent and verifiable for Parliament. In line with the Dijsselbloem committee, we find that the legislature is ultimately responsible in a formal sense for the core of education and the quality benchmarks laid down for this⁸. Decentralising the core objectives for Frisian may not be an obstruction to Parliament concerning the transparency of the objectives for education.

We shall be giving shape to the powers of Fryslân as follows: the province will be given the power to draft core objectives for the subject of Frisian on its own initiative. The conditions described above constitute the framework for this. The Provincial Executive of Fryslân will lay down the core objectives for Frisian only once the Minister of Education, Culture and Science has indicated that she can assent to these objectives. In that regard, the minister will examine the objectives for compatibility with the conditions indicated above. If a difference of opinion should exist about the compliance of the new core objectives with these conditions, the minister will ask the Education Inspectorate for its recommendations.

Education Inspectorate reports

The Hoekstra steering committee indicated that, when decentralising the drafting of core objectives for the subject of Frisian, the province should also receive the inspectorate's reports concerning the quality of teaching for the subject of Frisian.

We shall also be making arrangements in that regard: from now on, the inspectorate will report in parallel on the subject of Frisian to the Minister of Education and to the province of Fryslân for the purposes of information. The Minister of Education and, ultimately, Parliament will remain responsible for the quality of education (including under this the quality of education for the subject of Frisian language and culture). This arrangement will be confirmed in the Covenant for Frisian Language and Culture that is to be readopted in 2011.

Partial exemption

The Hoekstra report discusses the possibility of a partial exemption from the core objectives for Frisian. In the case of a partial exemption, schools would be exempt from some of the core objectives for Frisian but not from all of them. For example, they will have to give classes for an oral command of Frisian but not for a written command.

We shall be giving a positive reception to the principle of partial exemption. Greater differentiation in exemptions may make it possible to ensure that the exemption better suits a school's situation and population.

We shall be taking up the legal effects of this conscientiously. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science will ask the province to draw up in consultation with the educational sector the criteria for granting partial and full exemption that can count on a reasonable base of support from among schools. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science will approve the proposed exemption criteria on the basis of overall responsibility for the educational system. In the event of a difference of opinion or of opposing views about the criteria, the Education Inspectorate will be asked for its recommendations. Those recommendations will be public.

⁸ See in relation to this Parliamentary Documents II, Session 2007-2008, 31007, no. 6, page 143 and further.

In its report, the inspectorate refers to the importance of a support base for the subject of Frisian in order to be able to deliver education qualitatively.

The province's exemption policy must also be in order. To conclude, limiting the administrative burden on schools and optimising transparency for Parliament concerning the final attainment levels that apply to Frisian schools are of great importance with regard to the legal effect of partial exemption.

Legislative amendment

Taking the abovementioned conditions into consideration, we see sufficient opportunities for increasing the room for manoeuvre for the province of Fryslân through the decentralisation of the core objectives for the subject of Frisian.

This year, we shall be preparing amended legislation in which the power to change core objectives for Frisian will come to rest with the province of Fryslân.

In other words, should it be deemed necessary, the province will be given the lead and the steering role in this regard to draft new core objectives in constructive consultation with the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. We shall be making room for the aforementioned conditions in this proposed amendment. The Provincial Executive of Fryslân will not adopt the core objectives before the Minister of Education, Culture and Science has indicated that she can assent to the proposed core objectives on the basis of her overall responsibility for the educational system.

In the event of a difference of opinion or of opposing views on, for example, the safeguards and conditions, the Education Inspectorate will be asked for its recommendations. Those recommendations will be public.

The amendment to legislation will also incorporate the principle of partial exemption clad with adequate safeguards as described above.

Vocational training/professional education

With regard to vocational training and adult education, the Hoekstra steering committee argued further for final attainment levels for Frisian, specific to courses in which that language was of relevance, to be laid down in a ministerial regulation. However, there is always room for the Frisian language in the 'optional subjects' of a vocational training course. This is precisely so that a different emphasis can be put in place from region to region when designing a vocational training course. We would like to leave this freedom to the training courses themselves to develop their own education. Should the province of Fryslân deem it necessary, it can take the initiative to come to arrangements with regional education institutions and the corporate sector concerning the subject of 'Frisian' in vocational training/professional education courses.

§4. Together for Frisian

In conclusion: we wish to set jointly to work on improving the teaching of Frisian. To that end, we shall be supporting the province by investing in the quality of education.

We shall be giving Frisians the maximum freedom to take their responsibility for Frisian education. We shall bring this about by means of an amendment to the requisite Acts of Parliament. This legislative amendment process will be initiated in the course of 2011. As a result, its incorporation in the Frisian Language Act announced in the coalition agreement will no longer be necessary.

Fryslân will then be able to take the initiative to adjust the core objectives to its own views concerning the ultimate goals for the subject of Frisian. Additionally, Fryslân will be given the freedom to provide a customised approach to schools with regard to its exemptions policy. Both legislative amendments will be clad with sufficient safeguards.

It is clear to Frisian schools, to school boards and to us that the priority lies with the quality of education. The subject of Frisian constitutes an integral part of this to the province of Fryslân. This reciprocally reinforces the province's policy in respect of Frisian and central government's general educational policy as also agreed in 2001 in the Covenant for Frisian Language and Culture.

This Council of Ministers aims to raise the bar in all educational sectors. All students have the right to an education that brings out the best in them, including Frisian.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science,

Marja van Bijsterveldt-Vliegenthart

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations,

J.P.H. Donner

Appendix 2

Provincial policy on the Limburgish language (2008-2011)

The Limburger language in the Netherlands

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Within the Netherlands, the Limburger language is spoken in the province of Limburg. There are three main variants, spoken respectively in
- north Limburg,
 - central and south Limburg,
 - south-east Limburg (the area around Heerlen, Kerkrade and Vaals).⁹
- The province of Limburg has a population of around 1.1 million.
- 1.2 According to par. 1.2 in the 2007 State Report on the Limburger language, approximately 83% of the province's residents could be regarded as speakers of the language and 99% of Limburgers had passive knowledge of the language spoken in the place where they live (i.e. could understand it). These data come from research conducted in 2002.
- 1.3 In 2007, the University of Utrecht conducted research using an internet survey into the use of the regional language in the provinces of Zeeland, North Brabant and Limburg. 2,347 people took part in this in Limburg. It emerged from this survey that 99.5% of the respondents in Limburg understood the regional language; 94.5% indicated that they spoke it as well. The highest percentage of regional language speakers was located in the middle of the province (96.6%), followed by the north (96.4%) and the south (91.3%).
- 1.4 It also emerged from the research that of the younger speakers among the respondents (in the age group 11-27) 91.5% were still actively using the language. The complete results of this research have been published in: Velde, H. van de, Wijngaard, T. van de (a.o.), *Limburgs kalle, wie sjteit 't d'rmit?*¹⁰ In: L. Heijenrath (ed.), *Veldeke jaarboek 2007*, p. 56-72.
- 1.5 There are various local bodies concerned with the protection and promotion of the Limburger language. The best known is the *Veldeke Limburg* Association, founded in 1926. With 3,500 members, this is the largest regional language association in the Netherlands. Other noteworthy bodies are the Vereniging voor Limburgse Dialect- en Naamkunde (Association for Limburg Dialect and Nomenclature, VLDN), the LiLiLi Foundation (Limburg Literary League) and Uitgeverij TIC. The activities of these organisations will be examined in more detail in the sequel to this report. Please refer to Appendix B1 for names and addresses.
- 1.6 When drafting this fourth State Report, use was made of data provided by the province of Limburg. In turn, the province of Limburg consulted the province's regional language officer.

2 Application of Article 7

2.1 Article 7, paragraph 1.a (recognition of languages as cultural wealth)

- 2.1.1 By recognising the Limburger language as a regional language within the meaning of the Charter, the Dutch government wished to make clear that it regards it as an expression of the cultural wealth of the Netherlands.
- 2.1.2 Prime responsibility for policymaking on the Limburger language lies with the local and provincial authorities in Limburg. The province of Limburg has taken many steps in this area.

⁹ Source: *Een eeuw Limburgse dialectologie* (A century of Limburg Dialectology): Hasselt, Maastricht, 1996, Vereniging voor Limburgse Dialect- en Naamkunde (Association for Limburg Dialect and Nomenclature, VLDN)

¹⁰ The title translates as: *Speaking the Limburger language, what is the situation?*

- 2.1.3 Par. 2.1 of the previous report (2007) examined the province of Limburg's decisions pursuant to which the province applies policy relating to the preservation and promotion of the Limburger language. A summary of those decisions is included in Appendix B1 to the 2007 report. Reference is made to this for the sake of completeness.
- 2.1.4 During the completion (in June 2008) of the *Woordenboek van de Limburgse Dialecten* (Dictionary of Limburg Dialects) project, the Provincial Council asked the Provincial Executive to support the creation of a chair for 'Language and Culture in Limburg'. This will be examined in more detail in par. 2.8.2 and 2.8.3 of the present report. Reference is made to par. 2.8.1 with regard to the dictionary project.
- 2.2 Article 7, paragraph 1.b (respect for the geographical area of each regional minority)
- 2.2.1 No measures of any kind have been taken to modify the administrative divisions within the province of Limburg in such a way as to constitute any obstacle to the continued existence of the Limburger language.
- 2.2.2 However, there were mergers between several Limburg municipalities in the period 2007-2010. Prior to these mergers, the *Raad veur 't Limburgs* drew to the attention of the municipalities concerned the existence of the bilingual place-name signs in Limburg and recommended that new place-name signs should also be bilingual (see further under par. 2.4).
- 2.3 Article 7, paragraph 1.c (the need for resolute action to promote such languages)
- 2.3.1 Par. 2.3.2 in the previous 2007 State Report on the Limburger language referred to the decision by the province of Limburg to make an annual sum of € 150,000 structurally available from 2007 onwards with regard to Limburg's regional language policy. A sum of € 56,000 is available from this for the regional language officer's projects. Half of this (€ 28,000) is allocated for the *Raad veur 't Limburgs*, while the other half is for the *Veldeke Limburg* Association. The regional language officer is based at the Huis voor de Kunsten Limburg in Roermond
- 2.3.2 The provincial subsidy of € 150,000 referred to in the previous paragraph was annually index-linked with effect from 2009. Total expenditure on structurally subsidised activities in the period 2007-2010 amounted to € 615,683.
- 2.3.3 The province of Limburg created the position of regional language officer with effect from 1 January 2007. The regional language officer is appointed to the Huis voor de Kunsten Limburg and, in that capacity, undertakes work for both the *Raad veur 't Limburgs* and the *Veldeke Limburg* Association. The province of Limburg has made resources available for the appointment of two regional language officers occupying a joint position (jointly comprising 1 FTE). In the interim, one regional language officer is being employed (0.9 FTE).
- 2.3.4 Contributions towards provincial goals for the Limburg regional language are also being made by means of annually recurring popular culture/educational projects such as the *KinjerKraom / Kinjerkultuurpries*, *Kinjer Vasteloavend Leedjes Festival (KVL)* and *KinjerOLS* as well as through activities by Stichting LiLiLi and the Vereniging voor Limburgse Dialect- en Naamkunde (VLDN). Total expenditure for these projects in 2007-2010 amounted to € 227,734. Please refer to the previous 2007 State Report on the Limburger Language for a detailed discussion of these activities with particular regard for par. 2.4.2, 2.5.1 and 2.5.3 and for sections 5 to 8 inclusive in Appendix B2.
- 2.4 Article 7, paragraph 1.d (the facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of such languages in speech and writing, in public and private life)
- 2.4.1 The province of Limburg encourages the use of the Limburger language in speech and writing, in both public and private life. It does this partly by supporting the activities of the *Raad veur 't Limburgs* and *Veldeke Limburg Association*, both of which seek to keep alive the Limburger

language in all its diversity as a valuable repository of regional and provincial identity. It is hoped that raising the profile of the Limburger language, particularly among young people, will be an effective way to ensure its survival among future generations.

- 2.4.2 In addition, there is a major focus on the Limburger regional language in local and regional broadcasting. The local press publishes weekly columns in the language, and many readers find this useful for practising reading comprehension. A variety of television programmes are presented in the Limburger language (eg. *Plat-eweg - radio* and *Kinjerkraom/Kinjerkultuurpriés - tv*).
- 2.4.3 Members of the Provincial Executive who speak the Limburger language do so openly in the media and at official meetings. Many journalists and radio and television presenters are bilingual. Regional language officers speak and write the Limburger language as a matter of course, providing this is not an obstacle to communication. In practice, their conversations and correspondence tend to be bilingual (in Dutch and Limburger language).
- 2.4.4 A number of Limburg's municipalities merged during the period 2007-2010. Prior to these mergers, the *Raad veur 't Limburgs* drew to the attention of the municipalities concerned the existence of bilingual place-name signs in Limburg and recommended that new place-name signs should also be bilingual. Among the results of this was the implementation of bilingual signs by the new municipality of Peel en Maas. Other municipalities in Limburg also introduced bilingual place-name signs during the period in question. Examples of this include Kerkrade, Heerlen, Brunssum and Maasgouw.
- 2.4.5 During the first six months of 2011, the province of Limburg made use of a variety of social media to launch the three-part Web TV series entitled *Streektaal spreken een kwestie van gewoon doen* (Speaking the regional language: just a question of doing it) on its provincial website, the regional language organisations' website.
- 2.4.6 In addition to this, BV Limburg launched the Literair Limburg series in 2011 in co-production with the national printing firm B for Books. A collection of stories will appear once each quarter in 2011 and 2012. The stories have been written by prominent, nationally renowned writers from Limburg. Every story will appear in Dutch and in the dialect pertaining to the place of birth or residence of the writer concerned.
- 2.4.7 Finally, in collaboration with the regional language officer, the *Raad veur 't Limburgs* organised a province-wide campaign in 2011 that signalled to parents the benefits of raising children in a bilingual environment. This campaign with its slogan '*Geer kalt toch ouch Limburgs mit de kienjer!*' (You talk to the kids in the Limburger language, too, don't you?) consisted of a poster campaign at bus stops, bus shelters, etc. and was backed up by full-page advertisements in Limburg's regional newspapers.

2.5 Article 7, paragraph 1.e (the maintenance and development of links between groups using the language and other groups employing a language used in identical or similar form)

- 2.5.1 The province of Limburg actively promotes collaboration between speakers of different varieties of the Limburger language. It does this partly by giving financial support to the negotiations and activities of the *Veldeke Limburg* Association, the regional language officer, the LiLiLi Foundation, the *Raad veur 't Limburgs* and its Belgian counterpart, the *Vereniging voor Limburgse Dialect- en Naamkunde*. These organisations maintain joint links and set up cultural activities together and with speakers of the Limburger language.
- 2.5.2 The *Veldeke Limburg* Association, in particular, organises a range of activities and uses its regional network to bring together speakers of different varieties of the Limburger language. All of the aforementioned organisations develop and implement goal-oriented activities targeted at young people of all ages.

2.5.3 The Vereniging voor Limburgse Dialect- en Naamkunde also maintains links between speakers of the various varieties of the language. A unifying effect is also being created through the websites www.veldeke.net and www.limburgsedialecten.nl which also function as guidance for regional language users.

2.6 Article 7, paragraph 1.f (the teaching and study of the languages)

2.6.1 Par. 2.6 in the previous 2007 State Report on the Limburger language describes the way in which and degree to which the Limburger language is used in schools in the province of Limburg. The following developments have occurred since then.

2.6.2 During the period 2007-2011, new pupil textbooks have been produced for the locations of Echt, Heerlen and Tegelen concerning the school-based course '*Dien eige taal*' (for primary schools) (see the previous 2007 report, par. 2.6.2). A second edition has been issued with regard to the corresponding teachers' manual and the pupil textbook of *Dien eige taal* for Roermond, Sittard and Geleen. A third and fourth reprint has since appeared (2008 and 2010 respectively) regarding the Dutch pupil textbook. In total, over 80 primary schools in Limburg are now using the school-based course.

2.6.3 New editions of the school-based course *Wiejer in dien taal* for secondary education use (see previous 2007 report, par. 2.6.3) were issued during the period in question for the locations of Kerkrade, Venlo, Maastricht, Weert, Horst and Heerlen. A revised new edition of the Dutch-language student textbook was also published. 12 secondary schools were using the course in 2011.

2.6.4 A brochure containing information about both courses was developed in 2010 in order to draw attention still further to Limburg's schools concerning *Dien eige taal* and *Wiejer in dien taal*. This was subsequently sent to all of the primary and secondary schools in those locations where the teaching material is available. This teaching material is placed at the schools' disposal free of charge.

2.6.5 Each year since 2008, the *Veldeke Limburg* Association has issued a teaching package based on popular culture. The target group is the upper years in primary schools. The text in these teaching packages is in a different Limburg dialect on each occasion. Teaching packages have now been produced on village fairs, the citizen guard, St. Martin's Day (11 November) and the theme of 'the road'.

2.7 Article 7, paragraph 1.g (the provision of facilities for non-speakers to learn the language)

2.7.1 Par. 2.7 in the previous 2007 State Report on the Limburger language describes the way in which non-speakers of the Limburger language are given the opportunity to learn (a variety of) the Limburger language. The following observations have been made further to this.

2.7.2 As early as 2003, the *Spelling 2003 voor de Limburgse dialecten* (2003 spelling for the dialects of the Limburger language) was developed and then put into print for the purpose of learning how to write the Limburger language. This can now be downloaded in a digital format from the website www.limburgsedialecten.nl. A sixth, revised edition of the printed version appeared in 2010.

2.7.3 In order to promote spelling of the language, 2009 saw the development of a book marker that listed in brief the principal spelling rules for the Limburger language. Over 10,000 examples of this book marker have now been issued. All of the spelling material can be ordered from the regional language officer free of charge.

2.8 Article 7, paragraph 1.h (the promotion of study and research on the language at the universities or equivalent institutions)

- 2.8.1 Par. 2.8.3 of the previous 2007 State Report on the Limburger language indicated that work was in progress at the Catholic University of Leuven concerning the completion of the *Woordenboek van de Limburgse Dialecten* (Dictionary of Limburg Dialects). This dictionary was completed in 2008. The dictionary, which has taken over 45 years of work, contains 39 chapters and can now also be accessed in part via the internet: <http://dialect.ruhosting.nl/wld>.
- 2.8.2 On 6 July 2010, the Provincial Executive assented to the structure-based report and the appointment of an endowed-chair professorship for Language and Culture in Limburg at the University of Maastricht while affording the possibility of a PhD research position (0.8 FTE), both being for the duration of 4 years. Appointment of the professorship is anticipated for mid-2011.
- 2.8.3 The specific duties of the holder of the chair are:
- to research the ways in which language in Limburg is spoken, sung and/or written: at the core of this is research into the local culture and language within a global context;
 - to teach classes on language, usage and culture: the emphasis is on the promotion of creative writing (i.e. in a continental context), multilingualism (literally and figuratively) and the educational side of multilingualism in which the Limburger language is ‘one’ of the languages spoken in Limburg;
 - to provide social services: advising and supporting local and provincial initiatives through research into changes in language usage and public activities such as lectures, speeches and publications. Indirect support will be provided in the form of a presence in the media and debates that are connected with a creative Limburg and that are also relevant to teaching in the languages of neighbouring countries (German and French).
- 2.8.4 2011 has seen the initiation of a project in collaboration with the department of Language and Speech Technology at Radboud University Nijmegen. The project is focussed on developing a website where users can practise their spelling of the various Limburg dialects using their own computers.
- 2.8.5 Research is being conducted into the Limburger language at a variety of universities and research institutes. Doctoral research is currently being conducted at Radboud University Nijmegen concerning linguistic frontiers in North Limburg. In 2008, C. Giesbers took his doctoral degree at this university where he researched the use of the regional language in North Limburg and the neighbouring Rhineland (Germany). Students in the Linguistics Department at Radboud University can do a work placement with the regional language officer within the context of their master’s degree programme.
- 2.8.6 Bachelor’s degree and master’s degree dissertations that have aspects of the Limburger language as their subject are written with regularity within the context of the Linguistics degree programme at Radboud University Nijmegen.
- 2.8.7 Research into linguistic variations within the Netherlands is being conducted at the Meertens Institute in Amsterdam (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences). The Limburger language constitutes an important part of this. To take as an example, publications are made with regularity concerning the falling and rising tones and stresses so characteristic of the Limburger language.
- 2.8.8 Doctoral research is currently being conducted in the Institute for Nomenclature and Dialectology at the Catholic University of Leuven and will conclude with a dissertation describing the phonetic patterns of the Limburger language in the Dutch and Belgian provinces of Limburg.

2.8.9 Dissertations on the subject of the Limburger language are also being produced at the University of Utrecht within the context of the Sociolinguistics degree programme.

2.9 Article 7, paragraph 1.i (the promotion of appropriate types of transnational exchanges)

2.9.1 The Dutch and Belgian provinces of Limburg are involved in close cooperation on Limburger language and culture issues. Both of the provincial authorities, as well as the private associations dedicated to matters concerning the Limburger language (see also par. 2.5), play important roles in this regard.

2.9.2 Links with Belgian Limburg are being maintained by the *Raad veur 't Limburgs*, the *Veldeke Limburg* Association, the Vereniging voor Limburgse Dialect- en Naamkunde and both of the provinces of Limburg. One of the board members of the *Raad veur 't Limburgs* is from Belgian Limburg, and there is a *Bels(j)-Limburg* branch of *Veldeke Limburg* that is actively involved in the association's activities.

Veldeke Bels(j) Limburg is also actively involved in its own regional operations in Belgian Limburg and, since its foundation in 1999, has organised activities that reinforce the preservation of popular culture and, more particularly, the dialects in the province of Limburg. See www.veldeke.be.

2.9.3 The Vereniging voor Limburgse Dialect- en Naamkunde is based in Hasselt (Belgium) but is active in both Dutch and Belgian Limburg.

2.9.4 To date, Belgium has not ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Consequently, the Limburger language is not recognised in Belgium under this Council of Europe agreement, nor is it a well-established and accepted feature of daily life in the Belgian (as opposed to the Dutch) province. Belgian initiatives concerning the Limburger language are eligible for provincial subsidy and, as such, they are dealt with by the Provincial Centre for Cultural Heritage. The Belgian province of Limburg lays cautious emphasis on encouraging general sensitivity to, and appreciation of, regional language and culture.

2.10 Article 7, paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 (other provisions)

2.10.1 The measures and actions described above meet the obligations imposed by article 7, paragraphs 3, 4 and 4. The *Raad veur 't Limburgs* operates as an advisory body within the meaning of Article 7, paragraph 4, of the Charter. It makes recommendations to the Provincial Executive on the development of language policy of the province of Limburg with regard to the application of Part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Appendix B 1: Addresses of associations working to promote and preserve the Limburger language in the Netherlands

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